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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Universal Print Driver ~ EU Ruling By Spring? ~ Spyware Crackdown!
~ California Botnet Plot ~ MS To Buy AOL Stake? ~ Kill Bill's Browser!

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    - * Spam Finds New Home In Blogs *-
    - * Yahoo Pulls Out of AOL Stakes Talks *-
- * Microsoft Antispyware To Become Defender! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard           "Saying it like it is!"  
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It continues to be a mad house around here, at work. This accreditation survey coming up has everyone completely insane. Typically, it's having a huge impact on my department, as we are the area that does what it can to help our physicians be compliant. In some cases, our workload has increased ten-fold. A few more weeks and it will be over!

No snow in my neck of the woods this past week - thankfully - although it wasn't that far off. We have been getting gale winds, so the leaves are rapidly ending up in the yard. Hopefully, we'll be able to get most of them cleaned up this weekend; I can barely see the lawn underneath! With all of the leaves quickly falling, I'm reminded that the holidays are rapidly approaching. Like Joe, I'm sure, we're anxiously looking forward to enjoying another Thanksgiving feast. Both my wife and I actually have the day after the holiday off this year, so I know I'll be able to "bird out" and have a day to be able to sleep it off! Well, it's been so hectic this week that I haven't really had much time to pick a hot topic to ramble on about. So, let's get right to another round of A-ONE.

Until next time...

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->A-ONE User Group Notes!    -   Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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Crowd Gathers for Homebrew Computer Club's 30th

If you've never seen a couple hundred bona-fide geeks sitting on the edge of their seats with excitement, you should have been on hand Saturday for an appreciation of the 30th anniversary of the Homebrew Computer Club.

The celebration, which was part of Vintage Computer Festival at the Computer History Museum here, was a lovefest for several mavericks of technology. And amid tales of building some of the world's first personal computers, the adoring audience of Silicon Valley elders got to hear a

series of nostalgic stories about the history of one of the most influential computer users' groups of all time.

Founded in 1975, the Homebrew Computer Club boasted a series of very well-known technologists. Among them was Steve Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple Computer and a man known for his particular skill in putting together rudimentary, yet powerful, personal computers.

"It was the most important thing in my life and every two weeks I lived for it," Wozniak told CNET News.com, speaking of the Homebrew Computer Club. "I was too shy to even speak at all. The only two times I ever spoke were to introduce the Apple I and the Apple II."

Throughout the afternoon panel session, Wozniak and fellow club pioneers Lee Felsenstein, Bob Lash, Allen Baum and Michael Holley regaled the audience of several hundred - at least 100 of whom were standing along the walls of the overcrowded meeting room - with tales of the Homebrew club's history.

Felsenstein, who moderated many of the club's meetings, talked at length about how it served as a nexus of computer fanatics eager to meet likeminded people, exchange ideas and find project partners.

He said the club often would invite guests. Sometimes, though, they wouldn't show up and so he discovered that by asking the gathered participants if anyone knew anything about the subject the speaker was supposed to talk about, a discussion would quickly ensue that progressed from idea to idea as it moved around the room.

"So several times we created a lecture from the audience," Felsenstein said.

To some on hand Saturday, the Homebrew Computer Club was emblematic of the unique atmosphere made possible in the Bay Area in the mid-1970s.

"There were computer clubs at the time all over the country and the Homebrew Computer Club was one of the most famous and the most successful," said Liza Loop, who attended some of the club's meetings. "Two things made the (club) so successful. One was where it was, because it was in Silicon Valley...The other thing was the California counter-culture which encouraged the free exchange of ideas."

It was through the club's meetings that several members of the group created the machines that would become world famous. In particular, Wozniak's work on the Apple I set the tone for the future of personal computers that could be cobbled together from specific parts bought piecemeal from computer stores and at computer shows.

And it was during the meetings that the participants grew to know each other and appreciate each others' work.

"The significance of it for me was that it was where I met Woz," said Loop, who has spent much of her life advocating for the advancement of computers in education. "That's how I got the first Apple I."

Throughout the session, the panelists kept the audience laughing with anecdotes illustrating the lighthearted nature of the club and of the community of computer hobbyists in mid-1970s Silicon Valley.

"We had a lot of humor in the club," Wozniak said. "Any time you did

technical work, you had to have humor or it just wasn't enjoyable."

Indeed, Wozniak related a story about figuring out how he and fellow Apple co-founder Steve Jobs had broken into the digital user group account of John Draper - the inventor of the blue box, a device that allowed its user to make illegal free long-distance calls from any phone.

"We found his resume," Wozniak remembered, "and we were going to add something about his arrests, but we didn't."

Saturday's session at times had much the same feel of one of the club's meetings, veterans said. At first, the event's organizers tried to get a computer hooked up to a projection system, a process that took much longer than planned. Then, the only method anyone could think of to pipe in Len Shustek, another club veteran who was unable to attend the event Saturday, was to call him on a Treo and turn on its speakerphone. Predictably, the results were only mildly successful.

"This is really a lot like a club meeting, I guess," said Bruce Damer, whose Digibarn computer museum organized the panel. "Complete chaos."

In any case, the panel itself was only one piece of a weekend of events for the Vintage Computer Festival.

After the panel, the crowd moved upstairs to an exhibit hall where Wozniak signed autographs and hundreds of computer enthusiasts prowled around a room full of vintage equipment, much of which was for sale.

Among the featured items were original Macintoshes, stacks of Commodore 64s, Atari 2600s and dozens of its game cartridges, a complete Apple IIe system for \$50, and an original copy of Borland's Turbo Pascal for DOS.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It seems that the weeks are just flying by. Thanksgiving is less than two weeks away and Christmas is only around 4 weeks after that. Where oh where has the time gone?

I've had a little project on the back burner for a while now. When I was in college, I was an editor on the campus newspaper. I decided to track down as many of the old crew as possible. I found a few of them, and we've traded emails back and forth. We were a fairly tight little group, and it's damned good to be in touch with them again. Just trading memories about things we did a quarter of a century ago brought back all the good times. If you've got the time and the inclination, I highly recommend searching around the 'net for your old "crew".

Well, I'm about talked out for tonight, so let's get on with the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Erik Hall posts this:

"Hello all !

New version of MyMail 1.84 released.

Major improvements & bugfixes:

- A index file corruption problem fixed.
- Re-write of code to get faster downloads in the case when the user is saving mail on server.
- Printing errors fixed.
- Some minor bugfixes.

Read more in the history.txt file.

Download from:

<http://erikhall.mine.nu/~erikhall/programs/mymail.html> "

Ekkehard Flessa tells Erik:

"I've found it earlier and already added it to my online hotlist :-)

But that's not the reason I'm writing this.

I'm still using version 1.74, because with all otherwise working 1.8x versions I've tried, the SPAM filtering won't work as expected.

- I select "check mail"
- MyMail does so and says "you've got xx mails"
- I choose "details", as sometimes the SPAM filter will miss some or worse, classify non-SPAM mails as SPAM.
- The list displayed contains only SPAM messages. But once I hit the "retrieve" button, they are downloaded anyway! With 1.74, they were deleted, and that's what I mostly need MyMail for...

I don't want to manually un-check every single SPAM in the list, as in that case I wouldn't need any SPAM filter."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli tells Ekkehard:

"The spam filter is enabled within the "Select user" menu.
This 1.84 seems very stable again (unlike previous 1.8x) and all the post-1.74 bugs and strange behaviours seem corrected as well.
I think you ought to give it another try, after backing up your data, then in a few days you might find it's worth it."

Edward Baiz adds:

"It works fine for me, but when I get or send mail, the screen that

shows the messages gets messed up. No real problem. I just have to close the window and then re-open it."

Ronald Hall posts this about the PeST DEKA interface update:

"Hey gang. I guess specifically Alison and Chris. :-)

Anyway, now that I got the PeST in, I actually hooked it up to my CT60'ed Falcon, with a DEKA interface, using a Logitech optical mouse. The kind that has the adaptor that lets you use it like a serial or USB mouse.

Using the adaptor with the PeST, I tried it with straight TOS, straight TOS with the CT60 disabled, and everything going, booted into MINT. The results were always the same.

The PeST works just fine, as far as movement, clicking, etc, etc, but holding both buttons down for 10 seconds does *nothing*.

Well, thats it for now. Let me know if there are any other tests or things I can try."

Greg Goodwin tells Ronald:

"Yep, although to be a bit more precise, mine does jiggle slightly.

The PeST IS in setup mode, however, and one can select the various modes well enough. For me, only one of the four is pleasant to use. Which do you prefer?"

Ronald replies:

"I never even tried any of the modes, once I saw it wasn't working like it was supposed to. Guess I'll have to hook it back up - or better yet, to my Mega ST where I can see what its doing."

'Chris' adds:

"Not wanting to sound dumb, though have you "counted" 10 seconds or timed it to a clock ? If nothing happens after say 15 seconds then something is a bit odd somewhere. No matter what you plug pest into the 10 second time will always be the same. In fact if you put LED's on PeSTs outputs and put 5V power on it, the LED's would flash after about 10 seconds...

BTW, Have you checked the 5V line ? Check it as far down the line as possible.... it *could* be that you have a small voltage drop on your 5V line, in which case this *could* effect the timings, I am not 100% sure as I have not done much work with the microcontrollers which PeST uses yet, but my best guess is that your 10 second timing could be delayed due to volt drops. Try holding down up to 30 seconds... basically as long as PeST has power it should be fine in that respect...

I've been using PeST on my CT60 Falcon all week and its fantastic, makes me wonder how I lived without one :P

Let us know how you get on!"

Ronald tells Chris:

"Yes, I held it for probably 15-20 seconds, by the second hand on my wristwatch.

Under MINT, after 10 seconds, the menu came up, the one that normally comes up when you press the right mouse button.

In normal TOS, it just does nothing."

Carey Christenson posts this question about a friend's EtherNEC:

"I have a friend that tore down his CT60'ed Falcon for remodeling his basement when he reinstalled everything he plugged in the EtherNEC cable to the cart port upside down. Now he cannot access the internet. He uses MagicNET like I do and it says something needs to be specified in services or something like that. Can this be fixed and if so how?? I seem to remember a thread from a while ago that talked about this. Cannot place my finger on it right now."

Djuro Pucaric tells Carey:

"Well, that's serious trouble, cartridge port may be damaged very possibly."

Edward Baiz adds:

"It could be something as simple as a bent connection since it was put in upside down. Happened to me once. Or it could be that something is blown on the motherboard, but I do not believe that is the case.

When and where does he get this message about the services? It also could be something is messed up in his settings, most likely in his ETC folder. When I installed my new Western Digital hard drive, I could not connect either with MagicNet. Turns out files in my ETC folder had to be replaced."

Ronald Hall adds his thoughts:

"Umm, if I recall that thread correctly, it potentially can blow something like a resistor or capacitor on the Falcons motherboard and you have to replace it.

Its a very bad thing to do, from my understanding. I hope not in your friends case, maybe he dodged a bullet."

Carey tells Ronald:

"I just did some google searching and found the exact thread after some searching and it appears to be a blown fuse named F2. His Falcon though is apparently booting properly. Unlike others that I have read that have said that their falcon resets with the EtherNEC plugged in.

But I passed the information on to my friend so that he can get his Falcon fixed soon."

Ronald replies:

"No problem. Sorry to hear anyone is having trouble with their Atari computers. It does sound like he may have gotten off a bit lucky though!"

Paul Hopkins asks about a hard drive for his Falcon:

"Have any of you had any success with using a Hitachi DK23CA-10 (10 Giga Byte) IDE drive in a Falcon ?

I am using HD 7.1 . The program lists the drive but cannot see it when I try to partition. The Falcon Just bombs out.

I seem to remember reading somewhere that a Falcon could access max 128Gbyte. Is that really so ?

The drive checks out ok on my friends PC notebook as being fully functioning.

Any ideas please as new drives of low capacity are now almost impossible to find.I am using a 6Gig IBM DCMA 21440 drive with no problems on my Falcon but my wife's drive on her Falcon is going down fast and I need to replace it as soon as possible."

Ronald Hall jumps in and tells Paul:

"You might need a later version of HDDriver? I think you can download a 8.x demo that should tell you whether or not thats the problem.

I'm not sure what the total top size is for hard drivers on the Falcon. I believe its about 1 gig per partition, up to the letter P? Not sure. Using something like MagiC or MINT though, you can certainly go much higher. I've got an 80 gig Maxtor HD that works fine with MINT."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's short, but the NewsGroup has been a little slow again. C'mon back next week and listen to me obsess about Thanksgiving Day turkey. I love turkey!

'Till then, keep your back to the wall, your ear to the ground, your eye on the horizon and your shoulder to the wheel... now try to get anything done in THAT position! Till next week, keep listening to what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Atari Licenses Unreal License!
    " " " " " " " " " " " " " " Michigan Video Game Law On Hold!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News      -   The Latest Gaming News!
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Atari Licenses Unreal Engine 3

Atari, Inc. and Epic Games announced that Atari has obtained the rights to use the Unreal Engine 3 and tools for games on next-generation platforms in a multiple-licensing agreement.

"We're excited to continue building our relationship with Epic Games and we look forward to tapping the potential of Unreal Engine 3 technology," said Jean-Marcel Nicolai, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Product Content, Atari, Inc. "By utilizing the Unreal Engine 3, Atari will gain rapid prototyping capabilities."

"We've had a long-standing licensing and publishing relationship with Atari and it is especially gratifying to me to see our technology partnership continue," said Mark Rein, Vice President and Co-founder of Epic Games. "We're confident that Atari will make several great games with our technology and look forward to working with the company and its developers in achieving that goal."

US Judge Puts Michigan's Video Game Law On Hold

A federal judge on Wednesday granted video game industry groups' request for a preliminary injunction preventing the state of Michigan from enforcing a new law aimed at banning sales of violent video games to minors.

The ruling from the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan comes amid a fierce campaign by lawmakers and some parents' groups to limit access to games with adult content. California and Illinois have passed similar laws and a Florida lawmaker is trying to get like legislation passed.

"(Michigan) has been unable to demonstrate the perceived harm it seeks to protect against," Judge George Caram Steeh wrote in a ruling obtained by Reuters.

He added that the state had failed to show what harm could result from selling games to minors. The judge also said "obvious harm" could arise from "stifling free speech" if the law goes into effect as planned on December 1.

"Plaintiffs have demonstrated that the Act is unlikely to survive strict scrutiny, and that irreparable harm follows from the loss of First Amendment freedoms," Judge Steeh wrote.

The Entertainment Software Association, the Video Software Dealers Association and the Michigan Retailers Association took on the Michigan law and are fighting the same battles in California and Illinois.

Courts already have blocked similar legislation in Washington State, the city of Indianapolis and St. Louis County in Missouri, finding that the laws violated free speech guarantees in the U.S. Constitution.

Calls to Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm's press office were not immediately returned.

"We are gratified that Judge Steeh has issued this preliminary injunction and in so doing has suggested that the arguments and research relied on by Gov. Granholm and the legislature are weak and unpersuasive," Douglas Lowenstein, president of the ESA, said in a statement.

The furor over video game content flared anew this summer when game publisher Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. pulled its blockbuster title "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" from store shelves following the discovery of hidden sex scenes in its code.

In 2004, the U.S. video game industry reaped sales of \$7.3 billion, rivaling U.S. box office.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

#### EU Takes Swipe at U.S. Internet Oversight

The European Commission on Friday took a swipe at U.S. oversight of the Internet but offered no concrete alternatives, in advance of an international summit on how the Internet should be run.

A U.N. report has proposed a multinational approach as a more democratic and clearer way of running the Internet.

The controversy centers around the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a California-based non-profit company set up in 1998.

ICANN doles out Internet suffixes such as the familiar .com, country suffixes such as .uk, and newer suffixes such as .tv, .biz or .eu. It authorises changes to the "root zone file," which matches those domains with numerical addresses.

The U.S. Commerce Department has ultimate control of the root zone file,

and Washington made clear recently it intends to maintain that role.

The U.S. Commerce Department was expected to surrender its control of ICANN, but said in July it would "maintain its historic role in authorizing changes or modifications to the authoritative root zone file."

Europe cried "foul," arguing Washington changed the rules of the game and plans to keep permanent control of the system.

"There was an agreement that the Department of Commerce control would be phased out but this summer the United States announced they would maintain this oversight function," a Commission official said.

A second European official added: "We just say this needs to be addressed in a more co-operative way ... under public policy principles."

Both officials asked not to be identified.

The European Union will try to reach agreement at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis on Wednesday and Thursday. But the United States has said it will not agree to any changes.

As matters stand, for example, if a country wants to change some aspects of its national top level domain, such as .nl for the Netherlands, that decision must be approved first by ICANN and then by a Commerce Department official.

The European Commission wants to take the Commerce Department out of the loop, but it is vague about what should replace that.

Pressed, European Commission officials referred reporters to its principles, which say that "the role of governments ... should be mainly focused on principle issues of public policy, excluding any involvement in the day-to-day operations."

But to American ears that sounds like replacing what they call the "light touch" of American Internet regulation with potential interference from upwards of 200 countries.

"We don't really see how an organization can have oversight and final veto control and not have an impact on day-to-day activities," said David McGuire of the non-government Center for Democracy and Technology in Washington, D.C.

"We don't think it's optimal for any government to be directly involved in the oversight management," of ICANN.

He said the U.S. government has never reversed an ICANN decision and eventually the organization should stand on its own two feet.

#### Grokster Downloading Service to Shut Down

Grokster Ltd., which lost a Supreme Court fight over file-sharing software used for stealing songs and movies online, agreed Monday to shut down and pay \$50 million to settle piracy complaints by Hollywood and the music industry.

The surprise settlement permanently bans Grokster from participating, directly or indirectly, in the theft of copyrighted files and requires the company to stop giving away its software, according to court papers.

Executives indicated plans to launch a legal, fee-based "Grokster 3G" service before year's end under a new parent company, believed to be Mashboxx of Virginia Beach, Va. Mashboxx, headed in part by former Grokster president Wayne Rosso, already has signed a licensing agreement with Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

"It is time for a new beginning," Grokster said in a statement issued from its corporate headquarters in the West Indies.

Grokster's Web site was changed Monday to say its existing file-sharing service was illegal and no longer available. "There are legal services for downloading music and movies," the message said. "This service is not one of them."

The head of the Recording Industry Association of America, Mitch Bainwol, described the settlement as "a chapter that ends on a high note for the recording industry, the tech community and music fans and consumers everywhere."

It was unclear whether Grokster can afford to pay the \$50 million in damages required under the agreement. The head of the Motion Picture Association of America, Dan Glickman, said the entertainment industry will demand full payment unless Grokster satisfies all its obligations under the settlement.

Grokster's brand will survive. The new fee-based version of its software will be available within 60 days, according to one executive involved in the deal. This executive spoke only on condition of anonymity because the sale of Grokster's assets is pending.

Grokster's decision was not expected to affect Internet users who already run the company's file-sharing software to download music and movies online, nor was it expected to affect users of rival downloading services, such as eDonkey, Kazaa, BitTorrent and others.

Glickman said Grokster will send anti-piracy messages to existing users, and the company is forbidden from maintaining its software or network. "Without those services, the system will degrade over time," Glickman said.

Grokster lost an important Supreme Court ruling in June. Justices ruled that the entertainment industry can file piracy lawsuits against technology companies caught encouraging customers to steal music and movies over the Internet.

The decision, which gave a green light for the federal case to advance in Los Angeles, significantly weakened lawsuit protections for companies that had blamed illegal behavior on their own customers rather than the technology that made such behavior possible.

The court said Grokster and another firm, Streamcast Networks Inc., can be sued because they deliberately encouraged customers to download copyrighted files illegally so they could build a larger audience and sell more advertising. Writing for the court, Justice David H. Souter said the companies' "unlawful objective is unmistakable."

"They're out of business," said Charles Baker, a lawyer for Streamcast.

"It's over for them. There was a lack of desire to continue to fight this thing going forward." Baker said the settlement does not affect Streamcast, the co-defendant in the entertainment industry's lawsuit.

The Supreme Court noted as evidence of bad conduct that Grokster and Streamcast made no effort to block illegal downloads, which the companies maintained wasn't possible.

#### Phishing Scam Lured Users with Bogus Google Site

An online scam offering the lure of free money through a bogus Google Web site has been uncovered by security company Websense, which reported that the site was shut down about 30 hours after it was first discovered on Monday.

The phishing attack employed a page that closely resembled the real Google home page, with a banner message claiming "You won \$400.00!"

Users were instructed to collect their prize money by transferring it to a credit card. To do so, they were asked to provide their account numbers. They also were asked to provide their home addresses and phone numbers.

After the sensitive personal information was collected, users were redirected to Google's legitimate Web site. The phishing site was hosted in the U.S., Websense said.

"This is a little different than other phishing attacks in that it attempted to entice people into divulging their credentials and using the Google name, as opposed to attacks that target banks or e-commerce sites," said Dan Hubbard, senior director of security research at Websense.

This particular phishing site did host other attacks targeting financial institutions, he added, noting that the approach taken by these criminals was fairly rudimentary when compared with attacks that use a Trojan horse or log a user's keystrokes.

And the Google mimicry reflects a disturbing trend. A recent Gartner survey showed that phishing attacks grew at double-digit rates last year in the U.S.

In the 12 months ending in May 2005, some 73 million U.S. Internet users said they received an average of more than 50 phishing e-mails in the prior year.

And an estimated 2.4 million online consumers report losing money directly because of the phishing attacks. Of these, approximately 1.2 million consumers lost \$929 million during the year preceding the survey, Gartner reported.

"The standard security rules apply in protecting yourself from a phishing attack," said Hubbard. "Don't click on links in e-mail messages, type in the address of a bank yourself, run the latest antivirus software, and obtain the latest security patches."

The European Union's Court of First Instance hopes to rule on Microsoft's antitrust case by early spring, court President Bo Vesterdorf said on Friday.

Microsoft has gone to the EU court to challenge a 2004 decision by the European Commission, which found the U.S. software company used near-monopoly power to muscle rivals.

"Hopefully we will have a ruling in early spring, hopefully before April," Vesterdorf told reporters on the margins of a competition conference.

He made no further comments about the case.

Brussels found that Microsoft had violated European antitrust rules through unfair business practices. It fined Microsoft and ordered it to make available a version of its Windows operating system without Windows Media Player.

#### FTC Cracks Down on Alleged Spyware Site

A U.S. district court today ordered a Web business offering free music files, browser upgrades, and ring tones to halt downloads of alleged spyware and adware, at the request of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

The U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, in Los Angeles, also froze the assets of an organization doing business as Enternet Media, Searchmiracle.com, C4tdownload.com, and Cash4toolbar.com, according to the FTC. In addition, the court halted downloads from an affiliate site, Iwebtunes.com, that allegedly spread spyware by offering free background music to Weblog operators.

The FTC's November 1 complaint alleges that the Web sites of the defendants and their affiliates caused installation boxes to pop up on users' computer screens. In some cases, the installation boxes offered a variety of freeware, including music files, mobile phone ring tones, photographs, and song lyrics. In another variation, the pop-up box warned users that their Internet browsers were defective and offered free upgrades or security patches, according to the FTC.

Instead of receiving the free files or patches, users' computers were infected with spyware, says the FTC.

The FTC complaint alleges that the defendants' software code could track PC owners' Internet use, change their home page settings, insert new toolbars into their browsers, insert a large frame displaying advertisements into browsers, and display pop-up ads. The software installed interfered with computer functions and could be difficult to remove, the FTC says. (A PDF of the complaint is available.)

The FTC is seeking a permanent injunction against the downloads. The agency is also asking the court to order the defendants to give up their "ill-gotten gains." Microsoft, Webroot Software, and Google assisted the FTC in its investigation, the agency says.

Defendants named in the FTC complaint are Enternet Media, Conspy & Co.,

Lida Rohbani, Nima Hakimi, and Baback Hakimi, doing business as Networld One, all based in California. The affiliate, also charged in the complaint, is Nicholas C. Albert, doing business as Iwebtunes, based in Ohio.

The FTC asks anyone who has experience with any of these defendants to contact the agency at [enrnetmedia@ftc.gov](mailto:enrnetmedia@ftc.gov) or to call 202/326-2992.

#### Microsoft AntiSpyware Renamed Windows Defender

In anticipation of the new security features that will ship with the Windows Vista operating system, Microsoft has updated and renamed a key component of its security arsenal. Windows AntiSpyware, in beta for roughly a year, will be called Windows Defender.

The shift is not just a name change for the software. Microsoft has introduced several new technologies to the tool, including the ability to detect and remove malware such as rootkits and keystroke loggers.

Windows Defender will not be available for a while, but likely will ship prior to the release of Windows Vista.

When released, the Windows Defender tool will be more closely tied to the fundamental layer of the operating system itself, with the software running as a system service instead of as a separate application. In addition, malware-signature updates will be delivered through Windows Update instead of through an update engine specific to the tool, as is the case now with Windows AntiSpyware.

According to Microsoft, the detection mechanisms of Windows Defender will be substantially improved over Windows AntiSpyware because it will use some of the malware-detection technology found in the forthcoming Windows antivirus software.

The Windows Security Center in Vista will be redesigned to detect whether an antispyware application is running and operating normally. Users will have the option of disabling or turning off Windows Defender and installing a third-party antispyware application.

Enterprise and corporate customers using Windows Server Update Services soon will start seeing Windows Defender in the product category as well as in a new category called Definition Updates.

In addition to being available to those who purchase Windows Vista, the new software will be available to Windows XP users as an upgrade, replacing the current Windows AntiSpyware technology.

Yankee Group senior analyst Andrew Jaquith pointed out that Windows Defender is part of a "rolling wave" of announcements associated with the highly anticipated launch of Vista.

"Microsoft is putting all the pieces together by adding rootkit and keylogging detection to its antispyware and antiphishing applications, and the company most likely will add host-intrusion and buffer-overflow protection to the package," he said.

The company's objective, said Jaquith, is to gain greater control over security in its products. "But the question is whether they offer

compatibility with other security offerings or try to do this all on their own," he said.

### Spam Finds a New Platform in Blogs

Spam, the bane of e-mail and the Internet, has found different digs online - Web logs. Blogs have become an irresistible lure for scammers eager to create new methods to deliver their junk advertisements.

The unwanted advertisements, known on the Web as "splogs," go where junk e-mail, faxes, and adware have never gone before, using the same deceptive practices in varying form.

Although the method of delivery might be different, splogs push the same old merchandise, including online gambling, porn, and get-rich-quick schemes.

The most common tactic is to create a fake blog filled with links to other Web sites. People using a search engine to find a blog on breast cancer, for instance, might find themselves on a site containing advertisements and links for porn sites.

Another method, known as link-spam, uses the feedback fields of blogs. Spammers post phony comments that have nothing to do with the blog's topic of discussion, and instead include a sales pitch or link to another Web site.

For example, the blog topic could be insomnia and a spammer will post a message about garden furniture.

The goals of splogging are twofold: trying to get people to visit the Web site, and at the same time trying to increase the Google ranking of the site to which it is linked.

"Spammers try to influence that [ranking] and make their own sites more popular," said Graham Cluley of Sophos.

The faux blogs and links are for the most part a nuisance for bloggers and companies that provide free blogs, according to Cluley, because they waste bandwidth and hard-disk space. Splogging also presents a security risk to bloggers who allow HTML posts from their readers.

"If you allow people to post comments on your blog, not only might they link to a malicious Web site, but they can post malicious code on your Web site," Cluley said.

Cluley recommended that bloggers limit the scope of what people can post. People who keep blogs might want to stipulate that respondents not include links to other sites, or they might restrict the type of HTML allowed.

"That will be a real pain to the spammers, although they may try to obfuscate their Web addresses by leaving off the 'http' or [putting] spaces between the [periods] in the URL," Cluley said.

Although blog providers are developing splog filters similar to those used for spam, Cluley says the failsafe solution is for blog keepers to moderate the comments their readers post.

"That will help and also let [bloggers] scan for offensive or inappropriate content as well," Cluley said.

### California Man Charged in Far-Reaching Botnet Scheme

The FBI has arrested a California man accused of assembling a botnet comprising hundreds of thousands of computers to spread spam and other malware, and of profiting from the zombie machines through the unauthorized distribution of adware.

Jeanson James Ancheta, 20, of Downey, California, was indicted yesterday in two separate conspiracies, as well as on charges of attempting to cause damage to protected computers, causing damage to computers used by the federal government in national defense, and accessing protected computers to commit fraud and money laundering.

The 17-count indictment from the U.S. Attorney's office alleges that Ancheta wrote malicious computer code, used that code to assemble botnets, and sold access to the infected computers for the purpose of launching distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks and sending spam.

The U.S. accuses Ancheta of conspiring to modify and disseminate the Trojan horse program "rxbot," which allowed him to create botnets, each with thousands of Internet-connected computers reporting to an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channel that Ancheta controlled. In a separate IRC channel, Ancheta advertised the sale of his botnets, according to the indictment.

Ancheta also is accused of providing commands needed to instruct the botnets to launch DDoS attacks or send spam, along with malware that would allow the botnets to spread.

The second conspiracy outlined in the indictment alleges that Ancheta caused adware to be downloaded onto the infected computers that were part of his botnet armies. To do this, according to the U.S. Attorney, he directed the compromised computers to servers he controlled where adware he had modified would surreptitiously install onto the infected computers.

Ancheta was an affiliate of several adware companies, which paid him a commission based on the number of installations. The indictment charges that he would vary the download times and rates of the adware installations to avoid detection, and that when companies hosting Ancheta's adware servers discovered the malicious activity, he redirected his botnet armies to a different server he controlled to pick up adware.

The suspect made about \$60,000 by installing adware on some 400,000 compromised computers, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

Among the systems affected by the botnets were computers at the Weapons Division of the United States Naval Air Warfare Center, as well as machines operated by the U.S. Department of Defense.

This case comes on the heels of the October arrests of three individuals in the Netherlands accused of operating a botnet of 1.5 million infected PCs worldwide, and of using this network to steal personal information and launch a DDoS against a U.S. adware firm in an effort to extort money from the company.

"This is clearly a growing problem with serious consequences," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for security specialist Sophos. He noted that about 80 percent of new viruses are distributed by botnets, which can use thousands of computers to spread malware. "They are used to deliver spam, Trojan horses, and other malicious code very quickly."

What is noteworthy about the California case, said Cluley, is that the perpetrator went beyond launching a denial-of-service attack and found a way to make money with his zombie machines. "The adware companies do not condone this type of behavior by their affiliates, but it obviously can be done," he said.

Cluley said throwing the book at Ancheta can serve notice to others who would wreak havoc through botnets. "People think they can get away with this, and can make money by selling access to botnets, so the fact that he faces several years in jail could be a deterrent."

If convicted of all charges, Ancheta could be sentenced to 50 years in prison. The case was investigated by the FBI in Los Angeles with the assistance of the Southwest Field Office of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the Western Field Office of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service.

#### HP Crafts Universal Printer Driver

Hewlett-Packard plans to announce an update to its printer management software along with a one-size-fits-all printer driver at its ImagePrint conference in Orlando on Wednesday, according to a company executive.

Web Jetadmin 8.0 adds the capability to gather usage data on individual users or applications and assign privileges to them, instead of just the printer itself, said Tom Codd, director of marketing for HP's enterprise imaging and printing group. For example, an IT manager could allow color printing only by members of the marketing department or only for documents created by a certain application, he said. Users who were printing word processing documents or other everyday material could be restricted to black-and-white printing, which is far cheaper.

The updated version of the software also allows IT managers to get a better handle on the status of ink and toner supplies and automatically order new cartridges if the supply falls below a certain level. And now printers that aren't directly connected to a company network, but are connected to networked PCs, will show up in Web Jetadmin 8.0's management console, Codd said.

Printers are the last frontier in the quest to inventory all the technology assets within a company. As printers have become more sophisticated, similarly sophisticated software is required to manage those printers and to make sure companies have a handle on their printing costs.

Web Jetadmin is available as a free download from HP's Web site.

As part of HP's announcement, the company is unveiling a Universal Print Driver, which will allow HP printer users to install a single driver that will work on just about any HP monochrome or color printer produced since

January 1997, Codd said.

Driver management is a huge headache for HP's customers, which often have dozens of different printers scattered throughout their organizations, Codd said. The Universal Print Driver is recommended for just about every HP printer customer managing a fleet of printers, he said.

Certain customers who need tighter control over the shading of a color printer or the resolution of a black-and-white printer will want to use the specific drivers for those printers, an HP spokeswoman said. The company believes these users make up an extremely small percentage of their customers, she said.

The announcements come almost exactly a year after HP's previous extensive release of printers and accessory products.

#### Microsoft May Buy Stake in AOL

Microsoft Corp. has emerged as the front-runner in talks surrounding the potential sale of a stake in America Online.

Several issues could delay any potential transaction. The New York Times reports one issue is whether such an alliance would be another risky partnership for Time Warner Inc. The company is also looking at whether a new partner at AOL could help Time Warner navigate the digital world.

Microsoft approached AOL several months ago to discuss joint ventures, but any agreement is still likely weeks away.

Last week Time Warner's chairman and chief executive, Richard Parsons, acknowledged the talks. But he says the discussions are very fluid, and they don't know whether a deal will even be reached.

#### Yahoo Pulls Out of America Online Talks

Yahoo Inc. has pulled out of discussions over buying a stake in America Online Inc., leaving Microsoft Corp. and Google Inc. as the leading potential suitors.

The decision to abandon the talks came after Yahoo chief executive Terry Semel and chief finance officer Susan Decker met in late October with Time Warner executives in New York, said Yahoo spokeswoman Joanna Stevens.

Stevens said Yahoo had "politely passed" on proposed terms and "walked away from any interest in a deal."

Two people close to the discussions said a key stumbling block was Time Warner Inc.'s insistence that it retain majority ownership in the AOL unit. They spoke on condition of anonymity because public discussions of any private negotiations were contrary to their companies' policies.

One of the people, familiar with Time Warner's position, said one arrangement under discussion had called for Yahoo to pay Time Warner in stock worth \$13 billion for an 80 percent stake in AOL's growing content

business, which includes its Web sites and the news, music and other services featured on them.

Under that proposal, the person said, Time Warner would keep all of AOL's Internet access business, which is in decline as users abandon dial-up connections for higher-speed cable and DSL lines.

The Yahoo withdrawal, reported earlier on the Web site of The Wall Street Journal, leaves Microsoft and Google as the leading contenders, with Google possibly combining with Comcast Corp. in a bid.

The interest in AOL comes as the company transforms itself from a declining "walled garden" focused on providing dial-up access to a provider of free content that is tapping the recent boom in online advertising.

Late last year, the Dulles, Va.-based company abandoned its longtime strategy of exclusivity and began making its rich offerings - including concerts, news, sports and e-mail - available through AOL.com for free, a model Yahoo drove to become the Web's top brand.

The Web portal side of AOL's business is worth about \$11.3 billion, based largely on AOL's advertising potential, according to media analyst Michael Nathanson at Sanford C. Bernstein.

A Google deal with AOL would give the Internet search leader a way to build a portal - and grow its advertising potential - while preserving an existing relationship with AOL. More than 10 percent of Google's revenues come from a partnership in which AOL uses Google's search results and the two companies share ad revenues.

A deal with AOL would be in Microsoft's interest as it could dampen competition from Google and create synergies. Microsoft's MSN online division and AOL share many businesses, including an online portal, instant messaging services and dial-up access.

There would also be considerable overlap between AOL's and Yahoo's businesses.

Yahoo, based in Sunnyvale, Calif., is the leading Web destination, according to Nielsen/NetRatings and comScore Media Metrix, as more people head to the Internet for news, entertainment, communications and other services.

#### Worm Targets Linux Systems

A new worm that attacks Linux systems and exploits several vulnerabilities in the operating system has been reported, and security firms are urging caution among users.

The worm has been dubbed "Lupper" by antivirus firm McAfee and "Plupii" by Symantec. Threat levels range from low to medium risk among security companies, mainly because the worm has not been distributed widely.

Although its threat rating is low, the worm is being watched for its potential to hurt Linux systems. It installs a backdoor on infected servers, which then can be exploited to create a network of systems that can launch attacks on other computers.

According to McAfee, the worm spreads by exploiting Web servers hosting vulnerable PHP/CGI scripts. It is a modified derivative of the Slapper and Scalper worms, which targeted Linux and BSD respectively.

The worm blindly attacks Web servers by sending malicious HTTP requests on port 80, McAfee noted in its advisory.

"If the target server is running one of the vulnerable scripts at specific URLs and is configured to permit external shell commands and remote file download in the PHP/CGI environment, a copy of the worm could be downloaded and executed," the advisory states.

Similar to Slapper and Scalper, the new worm creates a network of compromised servers based on peer-to-peer principles. This network could be used for denial-of-service attacks, McAfee warned.

Symantec and McAfee have updated their products to provide some protection, but Secunia security researcher Thomas Kristensen noted that because the vulnerability is in the library of many products, users of third-party applications might not know they are at risk.

"Users should be less concerned if the application they're using is from a Linux distributor, because they have patches available," said Kristensen. "But with third-party vendors, users might not know about the problem until they read about it."

The vulnerabilities being exploited are somewhat complicated to patch, he added. "Users should be careful to make sure they're protected by going to security sites and looking at the different components involved here."

#### "Kill Bill's Browser" Site Aims To Cash In On Google's Bounty

Four political activists from Massachusetts launched a parody Web site Wednesday dubbed "Kill Bill's Browser" to convince Web users to switch from Internet Explorer to Firefox.

Along the way, they just may make themselves a few bucks by getting people to change browsers.

With a color scheme reminiscent of Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill" films, the site features "13 Good Reasons to Switch from Internet Explorer to Firefox." Number 7? "It will make Bill Gates soooooooooo mad." Number 11? "Reduce your weekly family & friends tech support load to 8 hours."

But according to one of the quartet behind the site - who are also behind ExplorerDestroyer.com, which offers free scripts that Web site owners can use to entice converts - the parody is serious business.

"We think there's a huge opportunity for anyone who's creative to make a good case why people should switch to Firefox, and make money at the same time," said Holmes Wilson.

"If we got a ton of traffic, we can make a dollar per person the same as anyone else," he added. "But we really did it to showcase how anyone can do this."

Holmes, and his partners - Nick Nassar, Tiffiniy Cheng, and Nicholas Reville, all of Worcester, Mass. - are taking advantage of a new Google affiliate program called Adsense Referrals. The new plan, which debuted to virtually no fanfare Tuesday, pays Web site operators \$1 for each user they refer who downloads and runs a copy of Firefox.

"This is amazing, a bounty of \$1 on the head of each IE user," said Holmes, like his colleagues, a long-time Firefox user. "It's a story that could fly under the radar. Google's literally setting the stage for a gold rush around convincing people to switch from Microsoft."

While Holmes and the others have been fans of Firefox's community marketing site, SpreadFirefox.com - "It really raised the bar for organizing people online," said Holmes - Kill Bill's Browser and ExplorerDestroyer are their first real efforts in Firefox proselytizing.

On ExplorerDestroyer.com, the four posted a letter explaining why they created the site.

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